



Using Social Media in Business 3

Getting to know your unit

Assessment

You will be assessed by a series of assignments set by your tutor.

Social media is a phenomenon of the internet age; nothing like it existed before. Its immense popularity has provided a new way for individuals, businesses and other groups to communicate with each other. For business users, social media provides a new way to interact with the public and customers. This unit is about the ways in which businesses can make use of social media, the methods and benefits of doing so and the issues and dangers that exist. Understanding how businesses can use social media successfully will be a useful skill to have when looking for work in the IT industry.

In this unit, you will explore different social media websites and consider the ways in which they can be used for business purposes, including the potential pitfalls. You will then develop and implement a social media plan for a business to achieve specific aims and objectives. You will also collect data on the business's use of social media and review the effectiveness of your social media plan.

How you will be assessed

This unit will be assessed by a series of internally assessed tasks set by your tutor. Throughout this unit, you will find assessment activities that will help you prepare for the live assessment.

For learning aim A, you will need to look into how social media can be used by businesses in general, while for learning aims B and C you will need to plan and implement the use of social media in a real or imaginary business. To pass this unit, you need to ensure that you have covered all the Pass criteria fully in the live assessment. To achieve the higher grades of Merit or Distinction, you need to ensure that you present evidence which meets the requirements of the individual assessment criteria. The Merit criteria require an assessment or a justification, so evidence which is merely a description will not be sufficient. For M2 for example, you will need to say why you made the decisions you did and why alternatives were rejected. Similarly, some of the Distinction criteria require an evaluation.

Assessment criteria

This table shows what you must do in order to achieve a **Pass**, **Merit** or **Distinction** grade, and where you can find activities to help you.

Pass	Merit	Distinction
<p>Learning aim A Explore the impact of social media on the ways in which businesses promote their products and services</p> <p>A.P1 Explain the different ways in which a business can use social media. Assessment practice 3.1</p> <p>A.P2 Explain the audience profiles of different social media websites. Assessment practice 3.1</p> <p>Learning aim B Develop a plan to use social media in a business to meet requirements</p> <p>B.P3 Produce a plan to use social media in a business to meet its business requirements. Assessment practice 3.2</p> <p>B.P4 Review the plan with others in order to identify and inform improvements. Assessment practice 3.2</p> <p>Learning aim C Implement the use of social media in a business</p> <p>C.P5 Produce business-related content using appropriate features of social media which meet the requirements of the plan. Assessment practice 3.2</p> <p>C.P6 Review data obtained on social media usage and interaction. Assessment practice 3.2</p>	<p>A.M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience. Assessment practice 3.1</p> <p>B.M2 Justify planning decisions made, showing how the plan will fulfil its purpose and business requirements. Assessment practice 3.2</p> <p>C.M3 Optimise the content, format and features of social media which meet the requirements of the plan. Assessment practice 3.2</p>	<p>A.D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience. Assessment practice 3.1</p> <p>BC.D2 Evaluate the plan and use of social media in a business against business requirements. Assessment practice 3.2</p> <p>BC.D3 Demonstrate individual responsibility, creativity, and effective self-management in the planning and use of social media in a business context. Assessment practice 3.2</p>

Getting started

Social media has had a huge impact on our lives. Consider how social media is used by businesses. Do you ever click on adverts you see on social media? Do you follow/like any businesses? Have you joined any Facebook groups? Which ones did you join and why?



A

Explore the impact of social media on the ways in which businesses promote their products and services

You probably already use social media sites, but this unit is not about the personal use of these sites. Instead, it is about the ways in which businesses can use social media to promote their products and services. However you have probably noticed that some things that you post on social media are more popular than others: they get more likes or shares, for example. Have you ever thought about why you like or share some posts but not others? For businesses, understanding what makes people interact with a post can really help them promote their business on social media effectively.

Social media websites

There are a wide variety of different social media websites, from the very well-known ones, such as Facebook™ and Twitter™, to the less well-known ones, many of which have a particular focus. Instagram™, for example, is a social media website where users can upload images taken with their phone, while LinkedIn® is used for making business contacts.

Business promotion using social media

Social media has become hugely popular and many millions of people have signed up to accounts on social media websites. Each site has its own particular features and the sites are constantly developing and adding new facilities to keep existing account holders engaged and to attract new members.

In general, each social media website has its own unique features and structure that make it different from the others.

► **Table 3.1:** Key social media websites, their features, structure and target audience

Social media website	Key features and structure	Target audience
Facebook™	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect to 'friends' – both real-world friends and acquaintances, and people you only know virtually through social media (often friends of friends).• Friends post status updates, photos/videos or links and interact with others by 'liking', commenting on posts or by sharing posts.• Dashboard view showing newsfeed, links to messages, events, friends, groups, pages, apps and adverts.• Groups – both public and private social groups for friends with a common interest, different communities.• Pages – clubs and societies as well as businesses may have a page which users can join to see their posts.• Newsfeed – a scrolling panel in the centre of the Facebook™ main display shows posts from you, your friends, groups and pages that you have liked.• Events – both public and private events can be organised with a dedicated page.• Targeted advertising and trending articles appear in a sidebar on the right of the page.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals who want to know what is happening in the lives of their friends and family.• People who want to follow particular interests using groups.• Businesses who want to promote their products and services.

► Table 3.1: – continued

Social media website	Key features and structure	Target audience
Google+™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar in concept to Facebook™. • Users can organise friends into 'circles' which are groups of friends with which certain content can be shared. • Updates from a user's circles are displayed in the central 'stream' (similar to Facebook™ newsfeed). It is a multi column displaying friends' updates, and different circles can be selected using a menu bar. Communities allow users to join in a conversation about a particular topic of interest (similarly to Facebook™ groups). • Collections allow you to group your posts by topic. Other users can then follow a collection rather than everything you post. • Hangouts allow users to take part in multi-user video conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals with a particular interest who want to follow a community of like-minded individuals.
Twitter™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post short messages (max 140 characters) known as Tweets which are seen by your followers. • Follow other Twitter™ users to see their Tweets. Twitter™ is often used to follow celebrities and keep up to date with what they are doing. • Retweet posts that are considered interesting to your followers. • Suggestions for accounts to follow and current trends on the left of the page. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who want to know what is happening to celebrities and other people they are interested in.
Instagram™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload photos and short videos from your phone. • Use Geotagging to identify the location shown in the photo. • Filters can be applied to the photos to provide a variety of different looks. • Users can follow other people and see the photos they upload. • Users can connect their Instagram™ accounts to other social media accounts to share uploaded photos on those sites as well. • Simple newsfeed view, with a scrolling display of photos uploaded by the user or the accounts they follow. • Can only be accessed using mobile devices, not PCs. • Instagram™ has been owned by Facebook™ since 2012. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who want to share photos with friends and family.
YouTube™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload videos, and create your own video channel which others can subscribe to. • Carry out simple editing on videos. • Subscribe to YouTube™ channels created by individuals or companies with collections of videos on a particular subject. • There is a vast range of videos on YouTube™, including music videos, and instructional videos covering almost every imaginable subject. • For a business with a physical product, YouTube™ is an excellent place for product demonstrations. • YouTube™ has been owned by Google™ since 2006. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who want to upload videos. • Businesses that want to promote their product with a video. • People who want to watch music videos.
LinkedIn®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload a business-related profile showing your professional experience and qualifications. • Groups related to professional interests. • Company pages providing a detailed profile of a business. • Personal users can link to other contacts and network. • A good place to look for job opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business people/ professionals and companies that want to network and make contacts.
Pinterest™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinterest™ is a relatively new social media site which saw a big increase in users during 2014–15. • Allows users to create a scrapbook (or pin board) type collection of website links, images and videos. • Users can follow each other so they see their newly added content (so-called 'pins'). • Users can search and browse through any user's public pin boards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are interested in, for example, crafts who want to get ideas from others. • People who want to collect ideas on a particular theme.

Many social media sites work with each other, for example you can link your Instagram account to Facebook™ so that whenever you post a photo on Instagram, it automatically posts on your Facebook™ too. You can also post your YouTube™ videos on Facebook™.

Discussion

What social media sites do you use the most? What features of those sites do you find most successful and engaging to use? What types of post get the most interaction (that is comments, likes and shares)? Discuss this with your class and create a list of the most popular features and try to identify why those features are popular.

Key term

Brand – an aspect of a product or service that distinguishes it from other similar products. It can include, among other things, a logo, colour scheme and name. Companies often go to great lengths to develop a unique brand identity. Some of the best known brands in the world are McDonalds™ golden arches, Apple™'s symbolic apple logo and Nike™'s iconic 'swoosh'/tick.

How businesses can use social media

There are a number of ways in which businesses can use social media websites to support their business aims and needs and these are discussed in the following sections.

Promoting products and/or services and creating an image or brand

Businesses, just like individuals, can set up free profiles on social media websites. They use them to promote their products or services, and to describe their businesses to customers. Social media allows them the opportunity to develop an online community of followers. The aim is that the business will post interesting content that their followers (potential customers) will interact with by commenting, liking or sharing the content.

Many businesses use social media to help create a **brand** or image for their products. This is about associating the product in people's minds with the kind of image the company wants to portray. For example, a company might want to promote a healthy or sports-orientated lifestyle brand, or they want to associate the product with quality, success or luxury, or they might want to give a product a quirky, out of the ordinary, alternative image. The goal is to attract customers from their target market to think positively about the product or service, and ultimately purchase it.

Case study

Facebook™

Facebook™ was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 and originally limited to university students, but since September 2006 it has been open to anyone over the age of 13. After 2009 Facebook™ grew rapidly, and it had 500 million active users in 2010 and by September 2014 it had reached 1 billion active members. Facebook™ is the second most visited website in the world after Google™ and the third most visited site in the UK (after Google.com and Google.co.uk). After the US, the country with the largest number of Facebook™ users is India. However, Facebook™ is not as popular in every country as it is in the US and UK. In countries such as Japan, where local social media sites tend to be preferred, Facebook™ is still way ahead of other social media sites in terms of the number of users. In 2014, the percentage of US adult online users that used Facebook™ was 71 per

cent; its nearest rival was LinkedIn™ with 28 per cent of internet users. Source: www.pewinternet.org

Facebook™ has had a huge impact on the way people communicate and relate to each other. It has changed the way that people stay in touch with individuals and about forthcoming events. Facebook™ has also had a political impact. For example, it is said that Facebook™ played a major role in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, allowing people to easily organise mass rallies.

In recent years, the growth of Facebook™ has slowed, perhaps because it is reaching saturation in many countries and other newer social media sites such as Instagram™ and Pinterest™ have grown more rapidly. However, these newer social media sites still have a long way to go to reach the number of active users that Facebook™ has.

Discussion

Think about some of the ways in which you could create a brand image for different products. For example, suppose you were asked to promote an expensive luxury car, a low-cost airline or personalised marshmallows. What type of image would you want to portray for these different products? How would you achieve that? Have a discussion about this with your class and decide on a brand image for a number of different products.

Communicating with customers

Using social media is an excellent way to communicate with customers, especially about unexpected or time dependant changes to the business' products or services. For example, many train and bus companies use Twitter™ to update passengers on delays, cancellations and route changes. Furthermore, the communication does not need to be one way as social media can be used to obtain customer feedback and to gather customers' opinions. This can be a much more cost-effective method of doing market research than traditional methods such as telephone or face-to-face interviews. It helps customers to feel that their opinions and ideas are valued by the company as they feel that they have direct access to the company.

Customer service

Businesses can use social media to provide good customer service, by resolving queries and managing issues through their social media profiles. This is a method of communication that many people are familiar with and can access quickly and easily. When customers have questions or problems with a product or service they can quickly message or post on the Facebook™ page of the company or send them a tweet on Twitter™. For businesses to use social media successfully for customer service, they need to ensure that their business profiles are monitored regularly (or constantly) and that customers are replied to quickly, otherwise it may look like the company does not care about their customers.

Features of social media websites tailored to business needs

There are a number of key features of social media websites that can be tailored to business needs. These are discussed in the following sections.

Social media profiles and advertising

Social media websites do not charge users (individuals or business) to create accounts. They make money by offering businesses paid advertising on their website. On Facebook™, paid-for (sponsored) adverts appear on the right sidebar of the main newsfeed when you are using a PC or a Mac. On Twitter™, paid-for tweets (promoted tweets) appear among the tweets from the people you follow in your Twitter feed. Social media websites offer advertisers special facilities such as adverts that only appear on the pages of users that meet certain **demographic** criteria, for example age or gender, or adverts that relate to the user's recent internet search history.

Key term

Demographics – measurements used to put people into different categories. One reason to do this is to understand their likes and dislikes more easily.

Social media websites therefore need to attract business users and provide a number of features aimed specifically at them. Many sites provide facilities for businesses to

create pages and profiles for the business (both Facebook™ and LinkedIn® provide this). The profile tells the public about the business, what they do, their business aims and where they are located. Some sites also provide tools which show detailed demographic profiles of the people who visit a business's pages and how they interact with them. The best known example of this is Facebook™ Insights, which is a powerful tool for gathering data on the effectiveness of your posts and the profile of your social media audience. Twitter™ and Google™ also provide their own analytics tools. Facebook™ Insights is covered in more detail later in this unit.

If you want to place paid-for adverts on Facebook™, you can choose the audience you want the adverts to reach, in terms of demographics. For example, if you are a plumber, you really only want to advertise to local people so it would be useful to be able to target people based on their location.

You may have noticed that if you search for a product on a website like Amazon™, adverts for the product you have searched for start appearing on your Facebook™ page. Providing a link to a user's previous e-commerce site search history, and displaying related adverts on their page, is a business feature that Facebook™ offers to advertisers. The aim is to remind users of items they have looked at, but not yet purchased, in the hope that they will now purchase them. However, paid-for advertising is only a small part of what a business can use social media for.

Link

For more on Facebook™ Insights and analytic tools for social media see Data gathering and analysis.

Website and mobile device integration

Many people access social media via mobile devices rather than from laptops or PCs and this is a growing trend as people like to be able to communicate and stay 'plugged in' on the move. Most social media websites have mobile versions of their sites which are optimised for small screens. Mobile integration is important for businesses because it allows users to locate local services and may help businesses pick up passing trade. For example, restaurants and fast food outlets have the opportunity to attract trade from visitors to the area. Some specialist websites, such as Foursquare™, specialise in providing location-related information.

Link

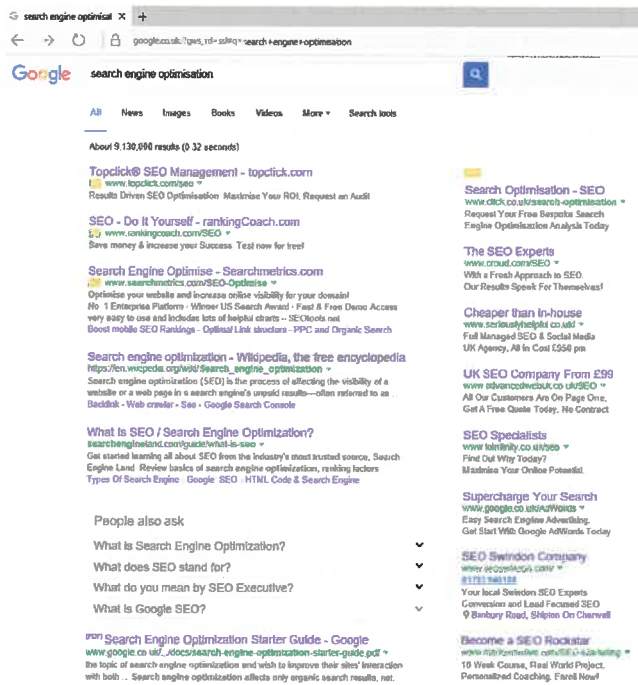
For more on mobile device integration, see Mobile device integration in *Unit 7: Mobile Apps Development*.

Search engine optimisation

Social media has an important relationship with search engine optimisation (SEO). SEO is the name given to a range of techniques applied to a website to attempt to improve the ranking of the website (how close to the top it appears) in unpaid search results (in other words, the standard Google™ or Bing® search results rather than paid-for adverts). The theory is that when customers search for a type of product or service, they will be more likely to contact the one that appears first in the search results and are very unlikely to contact businesses that do not appear on the first page of results.

All businesses want to improve their search engine rankings. There are lots of things a business can do to their website to achieve an improvement in search engine ranking, but they should also have and maintain a Google+™ account. As Google+™ is owned

by Google™, the most widely used internet search engine, using a Google+™ account is likely to help improve a business's search engine ranking.



► **Figure 3.1:** The results of a search 'Search engine optimisation'

Some of the most important things a business can do to improve the search engine ranking of their website are listed below.

- Decide upon and use appropriate **keywords** within the content of the website.
- Update web pages regularly. Search engines assume websites which are not updated regularly are less likely to be relevant to people searching for something.

Link

Keywords are covered in the section on Keywords in Content planning and publishing.

- Use the most relevant keywords in the URLs and web page titles and to describe the site.
- Ensure that website text is properly spelt and uses correct grammar. Search engines assume that websites which have many spelling errors or bad grammar are not likely to be relevant.
- Encourage other people to add links from their website to yours (sometimes called 'inbound' links). If other businesses think your website is worth linking to then search engines assume that this is because there is a lot of useful information on your website and that it is worth others being directed to it.
- Make sure your site is mobile friendly. Google™ downgrades the rankings of non-mobile-friendly sites.

SEO is a huge topic, and large companies will spend a great deal of time and effort ensuring that their website is fully optimised. Search engines themselves provide guidance on how to achieve good results with their products. For example, search for 'Google webmaster guidelines' to see the advice that Google™ offers to websites on how to optimise their content.

Key term

Keywords – words that identify the key things that a business has to offer to customers and are likely to be used by potential customers when carrying out an internet search for a product or service.

Audience profile

An important concept in understanding how businesses can use social media is that of the 'audience profile'. The audience profile of a social media website describes the nature of the people who have registered profiles with the site, in terms of their age group, gender, geographical location and so on. Different social media websites have different audience profiles and, over time, the profile of a site's users can change.

Research

Run an internet search for 'social media audience profile'. This should produce some interesting results, but make sure that you are looking at recent information and also be aware that many results may only show data for the US. How do the profiles of sites differ? Pick a variety of different audience profiles (age, gender, location etc.) and find the site which matches the profile the closest.

For example, in 2015 research suggested that more men than women used Twitter™ but the reverse was true for Instagram™, which had more female users. Instagram™ also has a younger audience profile than most other social media websites. Pinterest™ has a much higher proportion of female users than any other mainstream social media website. Another example of the way in which social media usage has changed over time can be seen from research carried out in the US into the use of social media by teenagers. During 2015, the number of teenagers using Twitter™ fell, while the numbers using Instagram™ and Snapchat™ rose, although Twitter™ remained the second most important social media network for US teenagers (behind Instagram™).

LinkedIn®, on the other hand, with its focus on professional business relationships, was more popular with the over 50 age group than any of the other popular social media websites.

A key benefit to a business of using social media is the ability to identify the audience profile that they have attracted. Facebook™, Twitter™ and other social media websites provide tools which show the profile (in terms of demographics) of a page's audience. This is usage data which indicates the profile of followers. These analytic tools, such as Facebook™ Insights, also show businesses the effectiveness of individual posts in terms of the amount of interaction generated (that is, likes, comments or shares). This type of data is invaluable for marketing, but is either not available or difficult and expensive to collect using traditional types of media (TV, radio, newspaper and magazine adverts) and market research. Hence, social media has fast become a powerful tool for businesses in terms of promoting their products and services, because it allows them to easily understand who their target audience is.

Business uses of social media

There are so many people using social media on a daily basis (there are more than 1 billion active Facebook™ users) that businesses have potential access to a huge market for their products and services. Any business can create a profile on any number of different social media websites but a profile on its own is not enough – they need to encourage people to follow their pages and must interact with their potential customers. In other words, their profiles cannot be idle. They should be updated with regular new posts and they need to be engaging to invite customer interaction.

Content formats

Social media websites allow businesses to post a variety of different content. You can post text and images on most social media websites, and many sites such as

Facebook™ and YouTube™ also allow you to post videos. Facebook™ works well as a place for short promotional videos but, because of the dynamic nature of Facebook™ (that is, older posts move down your timeline), if a company wanted to post instructional videos of its products, YouTube™ would probably be a better choice because all your videos stay in place on your YouTube™ channel. The different social media websites can complement each other. For example, if a company provided customer service over Facebook™ and Twitter™ and a customer messaged asking how to do something, the reply could link them to an appropriate video on the company's YouTube™ channel.

Almost all social media websites allow you to include web page links in posts. This allows businesses to link their social media with their own website. For example, many businesses that use Twitter™ tweet a brief comment (remember tweets are limited to 140 characters) alongside a link to a web page or blog page article.

The Facebook™ Poll app allows posts to include a poll. This can be used in a number of ways, for example it can collect customer feedback on a new product or version of a product. There is also a Facebook™ Quiz app which can be used to create a simple knowledge quiz or a 'personality quiz'. For example, a 'personality quiz' could be used by a jeweller, who creates a 'What kind of jewellery suits your personality?' quiz that suggests different types of jewellery to potential customers based on the user's answers to several questions.

Content focus and developing an audience

As well as being able to post different formats of content, businesses can use social media to post content that focuses on a wide variety of different purposes.

- ▶ To be informative – that is, to describe a business's history, aims and objectives in order to help potential customers buy into an image/brand. Social media posts can also inform customers of important information quickly (eg changes to train arrival/departure times).
- ▶ To promote – that is, to advertise and promote the products, services and image/brand/lifestyle ethos of a business.
- ▶ To entertain – depending on the business, posting humorous or other entertaining and engaging content could appeal to potential customers.
- ▶ To make offers – businesses use social media to make special offers to customers. For example, they might offer 24 hour discounts to customers who have liked and shared the business's page or offer a prize to the ten thousandth person who likes their page.
- ▶ To provide customer service – this will normally be in response to customer posts on their page. Responding quickly and directly to customers on social media and solving their problems will make a business look efficient and effective.

Ultimately, the main reason for businesses to use social media is to attract more customers and to make more money by selling more products or services. However, a business that constantly uses a 'hard sell' **direct advertising** approach on social media may end up annoying its followers rather than encouraging them to purchase. A much better (and ultimately more profitable) approach to developing an audience for your business is by mixing posts that promote products and services directly (and special offer posts) with other content, related to the area of business that the company operates in, that is either informative or entertaining. This approach is a form of **indirect advertising**. For example, if a pet grooming business had a Facebook™ page, they could include posts related to issues to do with pets (such as pet health, grooming and food), photos of unusual pets, or links to amusing pet videos and other similarly pet-focused content that would be of interest to their target audience of pet lovers.

Key terms

Direct advertising – where a business uses adverts which tell you to buy their product or sign up to their service. They use a direct approach by simply telling you what the product/service is and suggesting that you purchase it.

Indirect advertising – is more subtle than direct advertising. It attempts to create a positive attitude towards the product/service in the mind of the customer through sponsorship (eg a company sponsors a particular TV programme), product placement and other methods (such as those that social media uses) to try to create a relationship with the customer.

This type of engaging content, focused on issues which will be of interest to their target audience, will help promote their social media streams and encourage people to like or share their posts (on Facebook™) or retweet them (on Twitter™). It will also help to create a positive image of the business in the minds of the people who follow them, giving the impression of a business that is not just interested in selling, but has a genuine interest in the subject area and is knowledgeable about it.

Keywords

The choice of keywords is an important concept that relates both to a company's website and the content they post on social media. In most cases, when someone is looking for something online, they use a search engine such as Google™ or Bing®. It is very important for a business's success on the web that, when someone searches for the product or service they provide, their website or social media pages are listed at or near the top of the search results. Keywords relate to the likely search strings (the text a person searching for the product or service types into the Google™ or Bing® search box) that potential customers would use. It is important to make sure that these keywords appear in the social media posts and profiles that a business creates and are used in the URLs and page titles of their website, as it will increase the likelihood that the business's website and social media profiles will show high up in search results. For example, the keywords for a freelance editor's website and social media are the services they offer, such as 'proofreading', 'copy editing' and 'project management', terms associated with their work such as 'publishing' and 'editor', and the name of the business.

Developing contacts

It is also important to develop contacts via social media. Businesses can use social media to keep up to date with their industry and with suppliers and competitors. By following their suppliers, competitors and industry experts on social media websites like Twitter™, a business can stay informed and also use this information to plan their marketing, product development and keep up to date with developments in technology. This can be a much better method of keeping up to date than having to trawl through a range of magazines and websites. A business can further develop their contacts (their online community) by sharing or retweeting relevant posts from other business or individuals. This will hopefully encourage other businesses to return the favour and occasionally share or retweet a post from them. Remember that one of the aims of a business's social media page is to provide material that will be of interest to their target audience, so other businesses' and industry experts' blogs can provide a useful source of the type of content that is needed.

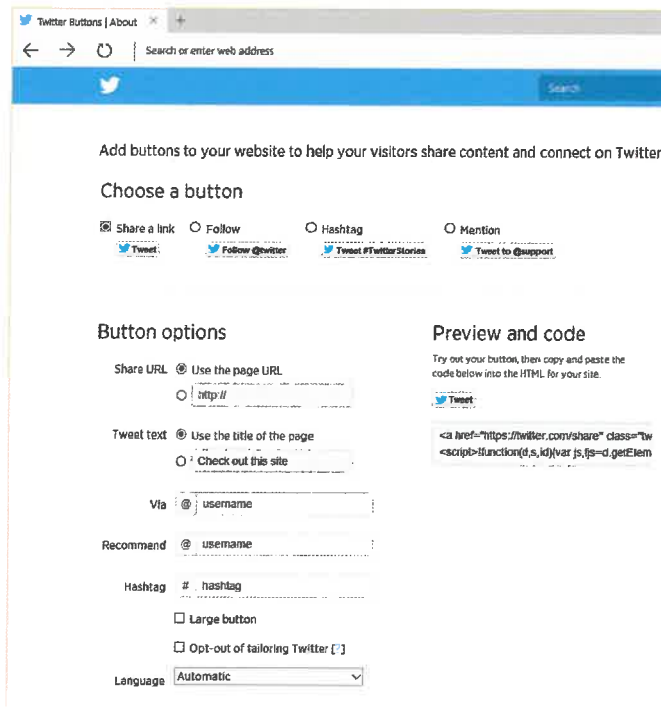
Research

What kind of business would you like to run? Who would be the target audience? What kinds of content would they be interested in? Search on Facebook™ for groups related to that area of interest. Search Twitter™ to see if you can find any relevant accounts of related businesses, organisations or industry experts. Search the internet to see if there are any blogs related to these interests. All the content you find could form the basis of potential social media posts for your business.

Social media and company websites

Most businesses will have a company website as well as social media pages. Ideally, the two should link closely with each other. The colour scheme, text (including profile information) and graphics should be consistent across both the company website

and all of their social media pages. Social media is dynamic, with content posted today and forgotten tomorrow, but a website is more stable. Although it should be updated regularly, this is the place where more static, detailed content should be presented. The company's website should include buttons to link to its various social media pages. Many social media websites provide HTML code to create these buttons and make them work, which businesses can use on their websites. Figure 3.2 shows Twitter™'s website resources page from which you can copy the HTML code required to put various types of Twitter™ button on your website.



► **Figure 3.2:** Twitter™ enables businesses to add Twitter™ buttons to their website that link to their Twitter™ account

Where relevant, a business's social media posts should contain links to the company's website. For example, a business might post a 'teaser' photo of a new product on their social media pages, with a 'find out more' link to a page on the company's website, where more detailed product information is provided and the product can be purchased.

Another way to link a company's website to its social media pages is to embed social media feeds into the website itself. Facebook™ and Twitter™ provide HTML code that can be used to embed a newsfeed into a sidebar or another area of a website.

Risks and issues

While social media provides many excellent opportunities for businesses to promote their products or services, using social media is not without its pitfalls.

Time constraints and return on investment

Creating and running the social media presence of a business is time consuming, as it takes time to build up interest in a business on social media and results will not be achieved overnight. A business would probably need to have at least one person who dedicates a considerable amount of their time to social media marketing, and it may be that a small or even medium-sized business could not justify this expense when a

positive effect on sales is not guaranteed. When any business invests time or money into a project, they need to consider the return on investment. In other words, they need to weigh the time and money spent on their social media marketing campaign/customer service against the potential increase in sales that they might be able to achieve. It is quite hard to make this judgement prior to setting up a social media profile, so a business might need to run a trial in which they try out the use of social media over a reasonable period (say 6 to 12 months) and then review the results to see what the benefits to the company have been (for example, has there been an increase in sales or have their customer service ratings improved).

Negative comments

An issue faced by all businesses using social media is that people may make negative comments on their social media pages. Every business has customers that make complaints, but when customers complain via social media other customers can see the complaints and this can be potentially very damaging for the business's reputation. The only effective way to deal with negative comments is for the business to respond to them promptly and correctly. Often the correct way to deal with a negative comment is to offer an apology and some kind of solution to the problem. Dealing with negative comments promptly requires someone in the business being able to monitor all the business's social media pages regularly and deal with any comments, preferably within hours of them being made. This significantly adds to the cost of using social media for the business, and the question of return on investment is raised again. However, companies that deal with customer service issues promptly and effectively are likely to gain a good reputation.

Unforeseen consequences

There can be unforeseen consequences of posting content to social media. There is a very wide range of different opinions and beliefs among the general public, both within the UK and across the world. Sometimes, content which you find engaging and appropriate is felt to be inappropriate by others. It is very easy to post something on social media which you intended and thought was witty or sarcastic, but is viewed by others to be insensitive, crass or insulting. This unforeseen consequence of a post on social media can be very damaging to a business, particularly if the post and the offence people have taken to it goes **viral**.

There is also a danger that members of staff who post content on a company's social media pages might make comments or express opinions that are damaging to the company. This may be unintentional, and might be done with the intention of being friendly and helpful to a customer. For example, an employee dealing with complaints about a particular product, might, in an attempt to calm an angry customer, agree with the customer that the product is not ready for sale or contains serious flaws. As this will be seen publicly on social media, it could potentially be damaging to sales of the product and the company's reputation.

Key term

Viral – a social media post is said to have gone 'viral' if it is shared by numerous people who themselves share it (and so on). As more and more people share the post, the number of people who see it can increase into millions. Having a social media post go viral is often considered a good thing unless, of course, it is regarding a negative issue about a company.

Case study

Urban Outfitters

In October 2012, a serious storm called Hurricane Sandy hit the east coast of the US. It left 71 people dead and caused 71 billion dollars' worth of damage. US clothing retailer, Urban Outfitters, tweeted: 'This storm blows (but free shipping doesn't)! Today only...' with the hashtag #ALLSOGGY. Although at the time of the tweet the full extent of the devastation caused by the storm was not yet known, it was a tasteless and inappropriate tweet as no one wants to see a company trying to make money out of peoples' misfortune. This is widely quoted as an example of a social media public relations disaster.

Security issues

Using social media can create a number of security risks for a business. Cyber criminals are always looking for ways to attack and defraud companies and social media provides an opportunity for them. These risks can take a number of different forms.

- ▶ **Malware** – Cyber criminals may try to trick social media users into installing some kind of **malware**. For example, by posting something interesting and inviting, they encourage users to click on a link which then downloads malware. Alternatively, cyber criminals may trick users into giving away their login credentials. Businesses must therefore make sure that their employees are aware of these dangers and take extra care when using social media and engaging with customers. The business must, of course, also ensure that their anti-virus software is always up to date.
- ▶ **Ransom/blackmail** – A company, by raising its profile on social media, may attract the attention of cyber criminals who then target the company. This could potentially lead to a variety of attacks including those designed to extract a ransom from the company, for example a **denial-of-service (DoS) attack** on the company website (which is essentially blackmail).
- ▶ **Company-sensitive and personal information** – Members of staff may inadvertently give away company-sensitive information or personal information (about members of staff or customers). Alternatively, the information is stolen by cyber criminals who trick staff into giving away this information by messaging them through the company's social media pages with seemingly innocent requests. To protect themselves against these, and other, risks associated with social media, businesses need to ensure that their staff are fully trained in the use of social media and are aware of what they can and cannot do and say. This is usually spelt out in a social media policy document, which will be covered in detail later in this unit.

Link

To learn more about social media policies, see Developing a social media policy.

Key terms

Malware – an umbrella term for a range of different types of software that have a malicious intent. Malware includes viruses and Trojans and spyware, among others.

Denial-of-service (DoS) attack – an attack on a company's website which involves sending so many bogus requests to the server where the website is hosted that it is overwhelmed and cannot respond to legitimate requests. The likely purpose of the attack is either revenge or blackmail.



PAUSE POINT

Make a list of the risks and issues that a business of your choice would face when using social media.

Hint

Look back through the topics covered in this section and think about how they relate to a business of your choice.

Extend

For each risk or issue that you identified, work out how your chosen business would mitigate the risk or deal with the issue.

Reflect

As you work on through this unit, it is important to demonstrate the kind of behaviour that has a positive impact on others and on your learning (that is, to be professional). Professionalism mean things like showing a clear division between your personal and professional use of social media, and completing work fully and on time. You may also have to work with others in your class, perhaps providing feedback for them on their social media posts and by playing the role of a customer commenting on posts they have made. You need to do this in a supportive and professional manner, demonstrate good etiquette and be polite and reasonable at all times.

Assessment practice 3.1

A.P1

A.P2

A.M1

A.D1

You have been asked to give a presentation to local small-business people about how they might be able to use social media to promote and benefit their businesses.

You need to prepare a presentation including speakers notes for the business people, in which you:

- explain the different social media websites and the audience profiles they attract
- provide an assessment of the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a particular target audience
- evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience.

Plan

- What is the task? What am I being asked to do?
- How confident do I feel in my own abilities to complete this task? Are there any areas I think I may struggle with?

Do

- I know what it is I am doing and what I want to achieve.
- I can identify when I have gone wrong and adjust my thinking/approach to get myself back on course.

Review

- I can explain what the task was and how I approached the task.
- I can explain how I would approach the hard elements differently next time (ie what I would do differently).

B

Develop a plan to use social media in a business to meet requirements

Using social media offers businesses many benefits but, as outlined already, there are also risks and issues. Therefore it would be unwise for a business to start using social media without first forming a plan. A carefully managed social media campaign can avoid many of the pitfalls and can also help the business to clearly identify if the effort, time and money of running the campaign will be worth it.

Social media planning process

For a small business, such as a sole trader, the burden of planning and running a social media campaign will fall to the business owner. As part of the planning process, they should think carefully if they are going to have time to do all the things that will be required. In a medium or large company, there may well be one or more people dedicated to running the social media campaign, and in a really large organisation there could well be a whole team. Whether a whole team is involved in the planning or just one person, there are a number of things which need to be decided and planned.

- ▶ The specific business requirements – What are the business's requirements? What is the business intending to use social media for and what is it hoping to achieve by doing so? In a larger company, these questions will probably need to be discussed with the sales and marketing team(s).
- ▶ Content planning and publishing – What kind of content will the business post? How will the business obtain content to post, such as images and videos? What social media websites will the business have pages on? When and how frequently will the business post content?
- ▶ Developing online communities – How will the business go about developing an online community of followers? How will the business keep followers engaged once it has them?
- ▶ Enforcing social media policies – What will the business include in its social media policy? How will it ensure that employees comply with the policy?

Each of these areas of planning will now be looked at in more detail.

Business requirements

There are many ways in which a business can promote itself, for example newspaper, TV and radio, to name but a few. Before a business embarks on a social media campaign, it should consider what the benefits might be of using social media to promote its products and/or services compared with using other traditional methods.

Using social media may not suit all types of business. For example, a geographically-limited business selling a low-value product which cannot be easily differentiated from other similar companies except on price (such as a small grocery store) might not get much benefit from using social media. However, a business that sells a product which can be shipped worldwide and which can be differentiated from other similar products (perhaps by uniqueness or quality) is more likely to benefit from using social media (for example, a jewellery maker).

Requirements for the use of social media

Businesses need to consider the purpose of their use of social media, that is, what does the business want to get out of it? For example, do they want to use social media for the direct selling of a product and service, to create an image/brand, for customer service, to drive traffic to the company website or a combination of all of these? Without a clear idea of what the business requirements are, the social media campaign will not have a clear focus and is therefore not likely to be successful. Initially, it is better to have one or two simple and clearly defined requirements, rather than trying to do a wide range of things. Once the main requirements have been decided, the business also needs to consider who its target audience is, which social media websites are best suited to the business's products or services and what the aims of the business are.

Selection criteria – matching social media websites to businesses

Even if a business is suited to social media, not every social media website will suit every business. With so many different social media websites, businesses, especially small ones with limited resources, need to select the right social media websites for their business needs. They should focus their efforts (time and money) on those social media websites whose site profiles best match their aims.

- ▶ Facebook™'s dominant position in the social media market means that, for many businesses, a Facebook™ presence is a must.
- ▶ However, a business offering professional services to other businesses would probably want to include LinkedIn® in their social media pages. For individuals such as freelancers who offer professional services to other businesses, a LinkedIn™ profile will be of more use than a Facebook™ page.
- ▶ If a business's products or services target a largely female audience, then they might want to consider using Instagram™ and Pinterest™ as these social media websites have a higher proportion of female users than most of the others.
- ▶ A business that has a product or service which is highly visual in nature (eg a jeweller, fashion designer or wedding photographer) would be wise to look at social media websites such as Instagram™ for promotion because it focuses on images.
- ▶ YouTube™ would be a good choice for a business with a physical product which requires demonstration because it is a good place to showcase videos. For this reason, setting up a YouTube™ channel would also benefit video production and animation companies.

Any business should monitor the performance of its social media pages to ensure that its efforts are not wasted. If some pages constantly outperform others, then efforts should be focused on the most effective social media pages.

Success criteria and targets

It is important that the business considers how it will measure the success of using social media and the targets that it will set. Measuring success and setting targets is important because the business needs to be able to prove that the time and money spent by the business on using social media is having measurable benefits. Identifying criteria for measuring success means that a business needs to understand what the measurable benefits would be for that business of using social media. Largely, this comes down to fulfilling the requirements for using social media that the business decided upon. The extent to which they are successful in fulfilling those requirements is most easily measured by setting targets.

It is unlikely that any business will see significant results in a short timescale. It can take some time to build up followers and to develop an online community, particularly for new businesses or ones that have not used social media before. So the initial success criteria and targets that a business sets itself should probably be quite modest: for example, aiming to achieve a specified number of 'likes' or followers within 6 months of starting the campaign. If a business is using multiple social media websites it should set a target for each so that it can measure the performance of each social media stream individually. The target set should match the site's own terminology for interaction. For example, on Facebook™ 'likes' are normally considered to be a good basic measure of popularity, so a good example of a target for using this site might be 'achieve at least 500 page likes over the next 6 months'. Twitter™'s popularity, on the other hand, is often measured by the number of followers an account has. However 'likes' or the number of followers does not really measure interaction by users on

individual posts, so setting targets for interaction such as (for Facebook™) 'achieve an average of 20 likes, comments or shares per post' can be used. Ideally, the business's social media targets should be 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), so targets such as 'improve social media interaction' are not SMART, but the target 'increase the number of Twitter™ followers from 50 to 100 in three months' is SMART.

Timescales and responsibilities

When planning a social media campaign, it is important that the business decides who is going to do what within the team (if there is one) and creates an outline action plan for completing the tasks (that is, define who is responsible for each task and establish the timescales involved). There should be someone within the team who is responsible for setting the overall strategy for the campaign. They will probably work closely with the marketing and sales teams. There also needs to be people who will develop the content to implement the strategy (that is, set up the profiles/pages and produce content that will be posted) and there should also be people who monitor the social media pages and respond to comments.

	A	B	C	D
1	Day number	Day of week	Main task	Secondary task 1
2	1	Monday	Write and post blog post 1	Share blog post on social media
3	2	Tuesday	Brainstorm ideas for future blog posts	
4	3	Wednesday	Research possible guest authors	Get in touch with one or two possible guest authors
5	4	Thursday	Write and post blog post 2	Share blog post on social media
6	5	Friday	Start outreach campaign to connect with other bloggers	
7	6	Saturday		
8	7	Sunday		

► **Figure 3.3:** An action plan

If a business decides that they do not have the expertise in-house to develop a social media marketing campaign, they might bring in an external social media consultant to help them through the process, although this would obviously add to the cost.

The end result of the planning process is likely to be a proposal document outlining all the things listed above, along with the action plan. In a small company or sole trader this might just consist of some simple notes, but in a large organisation the proposal might need to be a much more formal document which is signed off (approved) by higher management who would need to agree the costs and resources involved.

Content planning and publishing

One of the biggest challenges in creating an effective social media campaign is to create content which not only reflects the company's image and products/services, but is also engaging for the audience. Users engage with content that they find interesting, useful or amusing and, by being engaged, they are more likely to interact with the content in some way: that is 'like' it, retweet it, comment on it or share it.

Target audience

When planning a social media campaign, one of the first things you need to do is to ensure that you have correctly identified your target audience. That is, you need to understand the types of people who are interested in your products or services in

terms of demographics (for example, age, gender, interests or income). Once you have done this, you can think about how you will engage your target audience through your social media content.

Link

For more on target audience look back at Audience profile.

Simply posting special offers or details of products and prices is not really enough to attract an audience, and using social media for direct advertising is not likely to be very effective. A much better approach is to use indirect advertising and to consider what kinds of things are likely to engage your target audience. Indirect advertising via social media involves posting content that is informative and interesting to the target audience, rather than just sales-orientated. The business needs to consider what kinds of content the people who are likely to buy their products/services (that is, their target audience) might be interested in. For example, a company that sells audio equipment (for example, speakers and amplifiers) might post links to news articles about new advances in audio technology, the resurgent interest in vinyl records and people who have unusual or super-expensive audio set-ups. This content is likely to engage their target audience, who will then be more likely to interact with the content and ultimately to consider purchasing products from this audio equipment company.

Some of the content that a business will post will be in direct response to the comments made by others on their pages or related to current events. It is obviously difficult to plan this content beforehand. Nonetheless, other content will need to be planned, even if only in outline, so that the plan can be adjusted if things change. Some businesses, if they can afford it, will enlist the help of advertising or social media consultants to help them develop content.

A common concept in marketing is 'trans media story telling', where one campaign is stretched across multiple platforms, each with an element of the campaign that is not available on the other platforms, a bit like a digital treasure hunt.

Link

For more on focusing content to match a target audience, see Content focus and developing an audience.

Keywords

The need to include keywords in profiles and posted content has already been mentioned, but how does a company choose the most appropriate keywords? The question a company needs to consider is 'what will people type into the Google™ or Bing® search box when they are searching for the product or service we provide?'. This might sound like a simple question, but it is often more complex than it might at first appear and there might be a range of different search strings used. For example, imagine a company providing wedding photography and video services in the Cambridge area. What would people type in Google™ or Bing® when searching for that kind of service? Here are some possibilities:

- ▶ wedding photographer in Cambridge
- ▶ wedding photos in Cambridgeshire
- ▶ video and photos for weddings

- ▶ photographer for weddings
- ▶ wedding videographer
- ▶ wedding photography.

Therefore it would be important to ensure that the company used the following keywords (which all relate to their core services, industry and location) prominently on their website (that is, in their page titles and URLs) and in their social media profiles. The keywords would be: wedding(s), photographer, photography, video, videographer, Cambridgeshire.

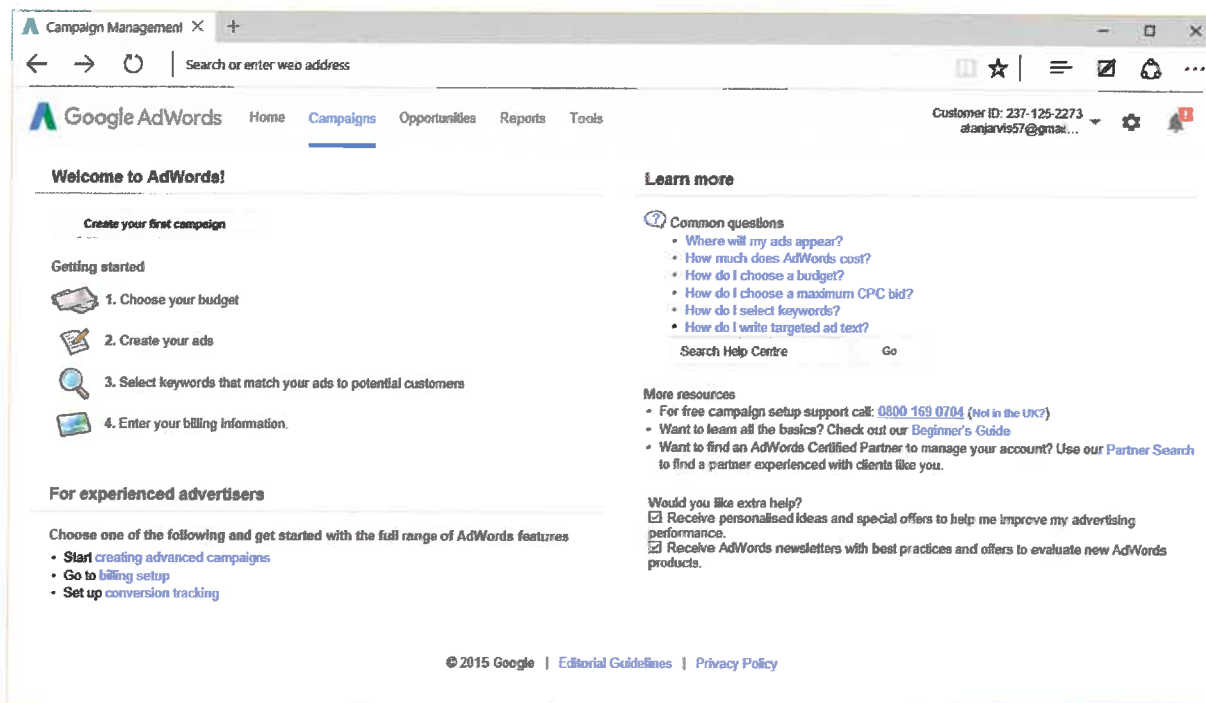
Google Adwords™

One very useful tool for identifying the most likely search strings to be used is Google Adwords™. The service is aimed at people who want to use paid adverts on Google™, but you can research search strings for free. Researching keywords is useful because it helps you to understand the most popular search strings that people use to search for a particular business, product or service. Once you know the most popular search strings, you can ensure that you use the correct keywords in your social media profiles and on your website,

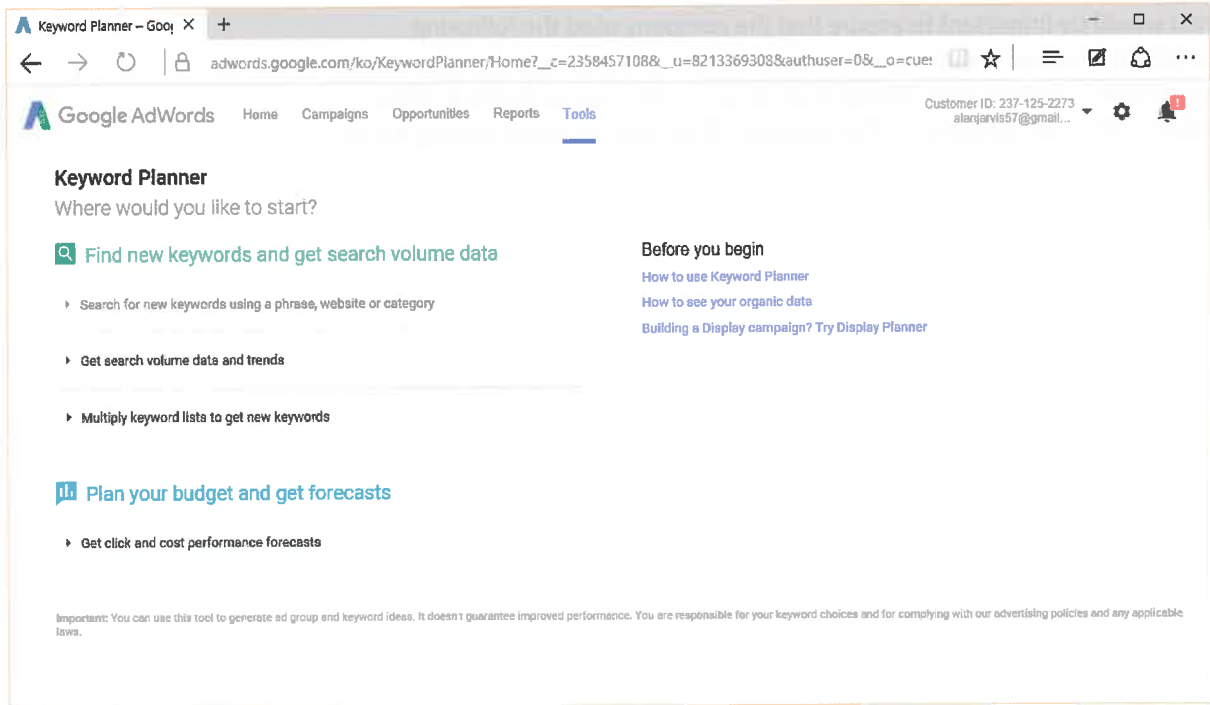
Step by step - Google Adwords™

6 Steps

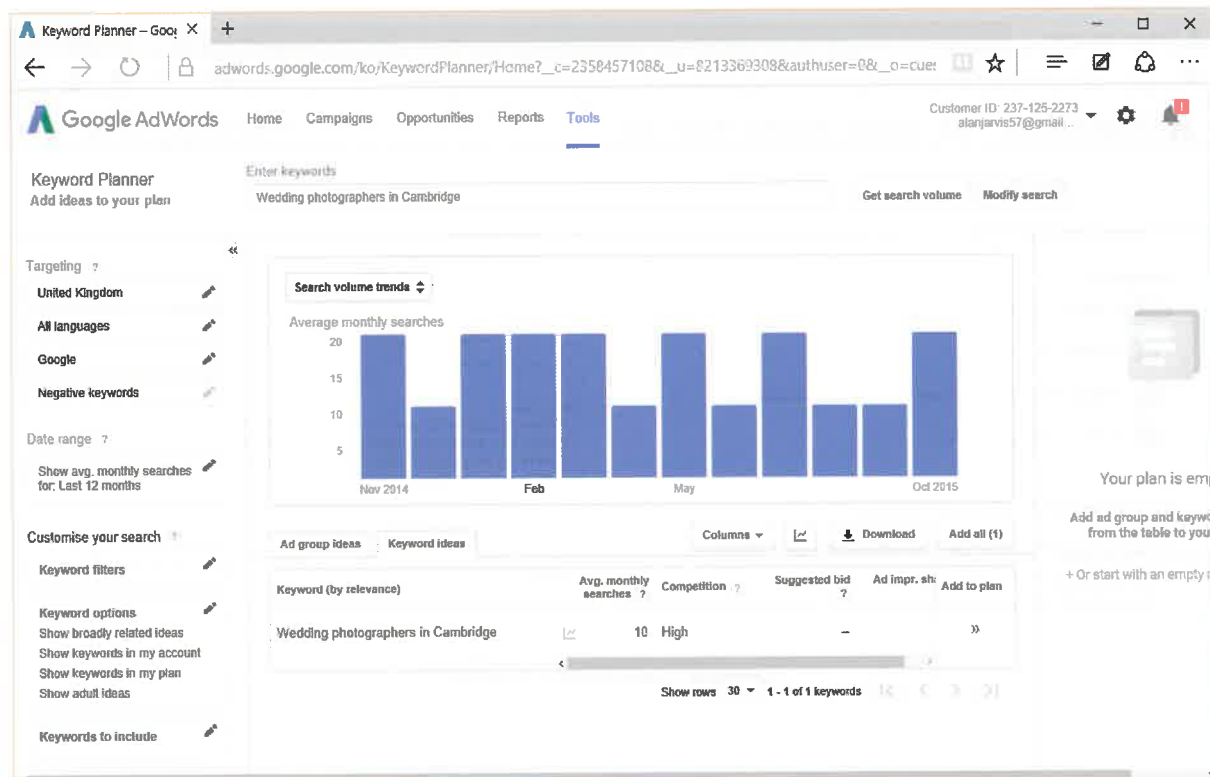
- 1 You need to register with Google Adwords™ (if you already have a Google™ account, you can just use those login credentials), then you can use the Keyword planner tool.
- 2 Go to the main page of Google Adwords™ at www.google.co.uk/adwords/



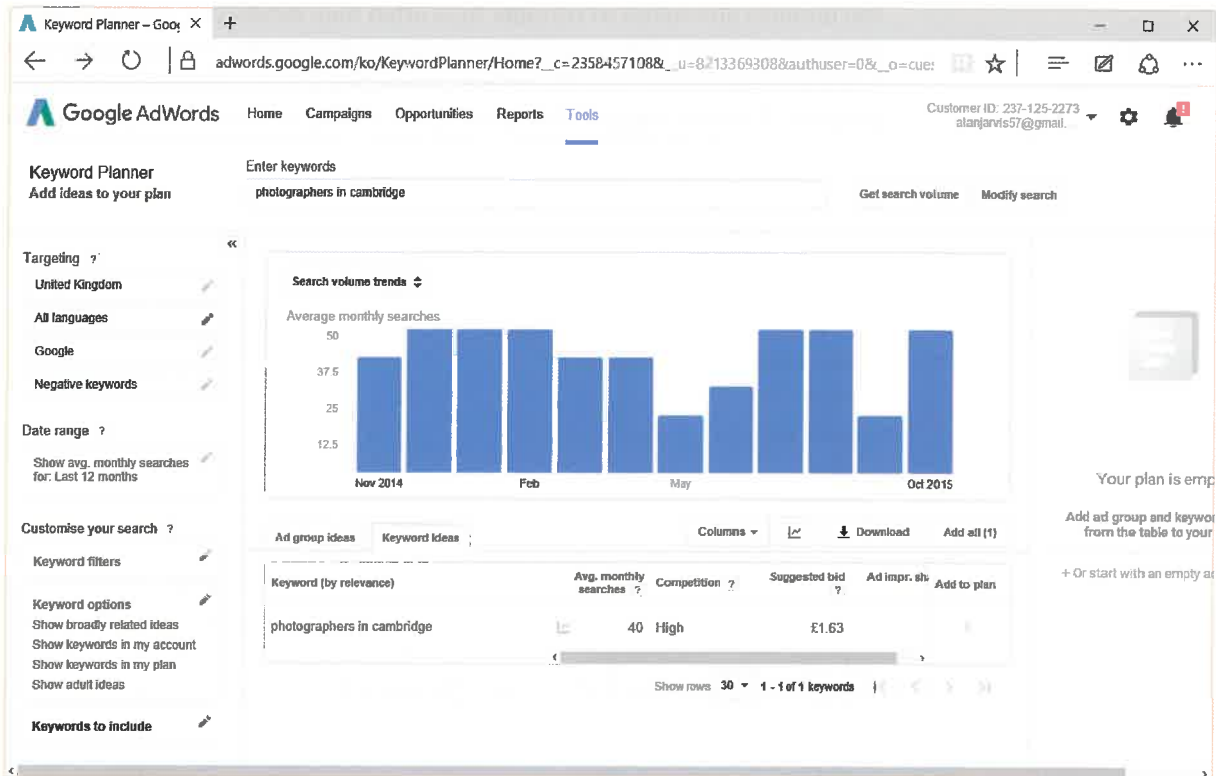
- 3 From the main page, choose Tools, then Keyword planner, which will then display the Keyword planner main page.



- 4 Choose Search Volume and Trends then enter a search string, for example 'Wedding photographers in Cambridge', then click Get search volume and you will see the results.



5 However, if you look at the volume and trends for 'photographers in Cambridge', you can see that the results are a little different, with an average of 40 searches per month compared with only 10 for 'Wedding photographers in Cambridge'.



6 Being able to do this kind of research, and finding out exactly what people search for, is invaluable to a company in helping them decide what keywords they should use on their website and in their social media profiles.

Timing

Establishing the best time to post content that has been developed is another important consideration for anyone planning a business social media campaign. Social media is very dynamic, and if content is posted when your audience is not online they will most likely miss your post. A business, therefore, needs to identify those days and times when their target audience is most likely to be looking at social media. Once a business has sufficient people interacting with, for example, their Facebook™ page, then tools such as Facebook™ Insights will provide this information. If a business is starting from scratch, then research suggests that, for Facebook™, on Fridays or at the weekend in the early afternoon are when most people are on the site, whereas Twitter™ is more popular during the week. Late at night or early in the morning is when fewest people are using social media. However, if the business sells a product internationally, then different time zones will need to be considered.

The advertising of some products is suited for posting at a particular time of day. For example, for a pizza takeaway restaurant the best time to post on social media would be just before lunch or dinner time when people are likely to be hungry and thinking about what they should eat. Some businesses sell products which have a seasonal variety. For example, a garden centre might post articles about planting bulbs

Research

You have probably considered the idea of running your own business. How do you imagine people might search for your business on Google™? Use Google AdWords™ to research the search strings that people actually use. Based on your research, choose four or five keywords that you would use for your business.

in Autumn, lawn mower reviews in Spring and information on how to water your garden in Summer.

Publishing schedule

The business also needs to consider how often they should post material to social media. Posting too often can be annoying for followers, but not posting enough can lose your engagement with the online community you had developed with your target audience. Research suggests that posting once a day on Facebook™ is about the right amount while on Twitter™ approximately three tweets per day is best.

As part of the planning process for a social media campaign, a business should produce a publishing or posting schedule to show what content it intends to post and when (see Figure 3.4).

	Date (Frequency of posting should be defined in your social media marketing plan.)	Channels (Enter all or name specific channels.)	Type of post (Sales, information, general interest, amusing.)	Content (Photo, video, web link, poll, questions, etc.)	Comments
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

► **Figure 3.4:** An example of a social media schedule

II PAUSE POINT

Being able to develop plans with timescales and targets is an important skill in many areas, and social media is no exception. Due to the dynamic nature of social media, plans need to be flexible and relatively short term (months rather than years).

Set yourself five SMART targets for a social media plan for a business of your choice.

Hint

SMART objectives need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Extend

Develop your social media plan further by outlining the target audience, what keywords you would use, and how you would time your posts.?

Developing an online community

There are a number of techniques that a business can use to help develop an online social media community. Posting content that will be of interest to the business's target audience and avoiding the 'hard sell' approach has already been mentioned, but there are many other promotional techniques that can be used.

People love to be asked their opinion, so asking questions, surveying opinion and requesting feedback is always a good way to engage with people. For example, a cake-making business could post 'our new flavour of cake is carrot and beetroot', but a more engaging post might be 'our new flavour of cake is carrot and beetroot, what do you think?' As well as engaging with the original post, people also like to respond to the comments left by other people. Perhaps an even better approach might be 'we are thinking of launching some new flavours, vote for your favourite', along with a Facebook™ poll. Another possibility is to link social media engagement with special offers, for example by offering a discount for customers who 'like' the company's Facebook™ page.

Of course, there is no point in asking your audience questions if you do not respond to them, so, to develop an online community, you need to monitor all your social media streams frequently and respond to any queries or requests promptly. If users post complaints or negative comments, then it is even more crucial that these comments are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Social media is not the appropriate place for detailed company and product information. This kind of information should be found on the company website. Social media posts should, where appropriate, provide links to the company's website. This allows people who are interested in finding out more to find it on your website, but avoids having to include a lot of information in a social media post that many people will not be interested in.

Developing a social media policy

As already mentioned, there are a number of risks and issues associated with the business use of social media. One way to help reduce some of the potential problems is to create a social media policy. This document lays down guidelines for the use of social media within a company and anyone in the company who is associated with the use of social media should be aware of the contents of the policy. Some of the things which should be included in a social media policy are detailed here.

Company image and philosophy

It is important that the way a company presents itself through social media reflects the image that the company would like the public to have of it, and this should be outlined in their social media policy. For example, a cut-price supermarket would be happy to post content about special offers and price comparisons with other supermarkets, whereas a high-end supermarket would not want to post comparisons with cut-price supermarkets or give their customers the impression that they were cheap, because their image would be that of offering a touch of luxury. Some companies also have particular philosophies that they want to put across to their target audience. For example, some companies might want to demonstrate that they are environmentally friendly or that they have high ethical standards: the Co-operative Bank is one such example.

Guidelines for content

The social media policy needs to state clearly what kind of content is acceptable to post and what is not. This will include things like ensuring that content is not offensive to anyone, and that it does not discriminate against anyone. It should use non-gender-specific terms (for example, police officer rather than policeman) and ensure that images show a mix of races. It may also cover guidance for staff such as never entering into arguments with customers, always showing respect for everyone's opinions, not making negative comments about competitors' products and ways of dealing with complaints or negative comments. The guidelines will also normally encourage people to be open, honest and respectful in their communications, and to never tell lies even if the truth is not what the customer wants to hear. For example, being honest about prices, delivery timescales or mistakes that have been made is encouraged.

Guidelines for confidentiality

There is likely to be information that every company wishes to remain confidential, at least for a specific period of time, and this information should not be included in social media posts or in replies to customer's comments. This may include a whole range of things such as details of new products that are currently in development, phone numbers of staff members, details of why products are priced a certain way and the profit margins that the company intends to make. The policy should make it clear to staff what information is confidential and should not to be made public.

Guidelines for security

As the security risks involved in using social media are quite high, the social media policy will need to contain information about how to keep account details secure, how to avoid malware infections and other security issues.

Link

To remind yourself of the security risks involved for businesses using social media, see Security issues.

Separating company and personal content

Most of the employees within a company will have their own personal social media profiles and it is very important that they do not confuse these with those they are managing for their employers. The social media policy will need to remind employees that they must never use the company's social media streams for personal messages or to get too personal in their interactions with customers. It may also restrict what the employees can say about their company on their own personal social media profiles. In addition, some of these rules and guidelines may be included in the contracts of employment that employees sign when they join the company.

Legal and ethical considerations

There are a number of legal and ethical considerations that a social media policy should cover. The use of tracking cookies to enable personalised or targeted adverts, and complying with copyright laws when posting images and other content that has been created by others are just two such issues. EU law requires the consent of the user before cookies can be stored on their device. You will probably have seen these message pop-ups when you first visit a website, asking you if you consent to cookies being stored. Images and videos help to make posts more engaging but, unless the assets are created in-house, the copyright on the assets needs to be checked: that is, the ownership needs to be checked and permission sought for use of those assets on a company's social media pages and this might require payment of a fee. The social media policy may well forbid certain practices which are considered unethical, such as using so-called '**Black Hat**' SEO techniques.

Key term

Black Hat SEO techniques – techniques that attempt to fool search engines into ranking a website higher than it would have otherwise been, by violating the search engines' terms of service and possibly by creating fake customer reviews.

Reviewing and refining plans

Planning the use of social media by a business is not a one-off event, but rather an ongoing process of review, feedback and refinement. By reviewing the quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of pages and

posted content, a business can, over time, determine which approaches to social media posting are the most beneficial, enabling them to focus their efforts on these approaches in the future. Businesses will work with any clients and other relevant stakeholders, including the in-house team, to review and refine social media plans and they will need to consider the following.

Gathering feedback from a client and potential users

To review and refine social media plans, the main technique will be to gather feedback from clients and potential users (that is, the target audience). Some of the feedback from clients will come in the form of analysis from a social media analytic tool such as Facebook™ Insights. It will also be useful to look at whether the business has achieved the targets it set itself for interaction on its various social media streams and whether it has met the success criteria that it set.

Communicating with a client

Sometimes, a company will be managing its own social media plans, in which case there would not be a clients as such, only senior management that the social media team would need to report to. Larger companies may hire a social media consultant to manage their social media plans, in which case representatives from the hiring company are said to be clients of the consultant. In such cases, the consultant would need to discuss their plans with the client in order to gain their approval and to improve the plans further. The hiring company may need to sign off on certain expenses involved in the social media plans. Working with a client can be difficult as they might not share your opinions or might disagree with your ideas. The important thing is to listen carefully to what the client says, and to consider what their aims are for their social media campaign. Remember that the client will probably understand the particular business much better than you do, but their understanding of social media may be very limited, so you need to listen to their explanations of how the business works and match that up with your knowledge of social media. Ultimately, the client is in charge because it is their company being represented on social media, but they will have hired a consultant for their expertise so should listen to their advice and suggestions.

Scheduling and documenting meetings

To work effectively and successfully with a client, you should have regular meetings with them. In these meetings, you (as social media consultant) should present your ideas and plans as they develop, and listen to the client's feedback. It is important to document these meetings (that is, to take notes) so that you know what was discussed, what feedback you received and any decisions that were made, in order to act on these decisions.

Agreeing and adjusting timescales

When planning a social media campaign, either in-house or with a social media consultant, it is important to agree timescales for when certain tasks need to be completed (such as setting up social media streams) and when targets are expected to be met. As mentioned above, communication is the key to a good relationship between a client and a social media consultant. Assuming that the communication is good, it would be fairly straightforward to agree to any changes to timescales within a social media plan based on the latest updates from the social media consultant on progress, or in response to changes within the client's business.

Refining ideas and solutions

Through gathering feedback and looking at whether success criteria and targets have been met, a social media consultant and client can see how successful their social media plans have been. They can also determine whether there are any parts of the plans, the targets they have set or the timescales they are working to, that need to be refined or adjusted, in keeping with the business's aims for their use of social media. The review work they have done, and good communication throughout, should enable the client business and the social media consultant to refine their plans and come up with any new solutions together, as well as reach any compromises that are required, and to agree a modified version of the social media plan.

Reflect

Working with social media will require you to respond to feedback from a number of sources, including the client and target audience (social media users who have liked/followed your social media pages). Receiving feedback requires that you do not take feedback personally, but in a professional and objective manner. It will also require you to learn from your mistakes, or at least improve upon your initial work, and to be flexible about your ideas. Reflect on how you would receive feedback in a professional and objective manner and respond to negative feedback about your work.

C Implement the use of social media in a business

Once you have created a social media plan, the next step is to implement it. You will need to select and use appropriate social media website tools and techniques to implement your social media plan.

Tip

You can practise using many of the tools and techniques required to implement a social media plan quite easily, because most social media websites will let you set up accounts and profiles for free, even if they are for an imaginary business.

Creating accounts and profiles

Once you have identified which social media websites are to be used by a business, you need to sign up for accounts, create and set up profiles, and then perform ongoing administration.

Step by step: Creating a page on Facebook™

2 Steps

1 Facebook™ allows anyone with a personal page to set up any number of separate business pages. To do this, click the Create page option in the drop down menu that can be accessed via the down arrow at the top of the main Facebook™ newsfeed page.

2 You then need to select the type of page you want to create. You can choose from: Local Business or Place; Company, Organisation or Institution; Brand or Product; Artist, Band or Public Figure; Entertainment; Cause or Community. For example, if you wanted to create a page for a professional photographer, you could choose 'Artist, Band or Public Figure', then choose 'Photographer' from the drop down menu, enter the name of the photographer or their business name, and then click Get Started. Now you can work through the process of setting up the page.

Tip

The area provided for the cover image is long and thin, whereas most images taken with a digital camera are much closer to being square, so you may need to edit a photo to make it work well in the space. However, you can reposition which part of the photo appears on the cover once you have uploaded it. Given the shape of the space available, only images which fit across a thin, horizontal area will work well; for example a vertical full-length image of a person would not be suitable as a cover image.

Customisation and configuration of a company profile

The company profiles created for the various different social media websites being used should all tie together in terms of the company image they are portraying. This is achieved through the design scheme used, tailored to each social media website's specifications, and through the text used to describe the company. They should all also include the keywords that have been identified for that business during the planning stage.

Most social media websites require the use of a background image or banner on profile pages. On Facebook™, this is known as the cover image, while on Twitter™ it is called the header photo. The profile page should also have a company logo, known as the profile picture on Facebook™ and profile photo on Twitter™.

You may need to put some thought into the cover image and profile picture. An existing business may already have a logo which can be used for the profile picture. A sole trader who offers some kind of service where they will meet their customers in person (such as a decorating or house cleaning service) might, alternatively, want to use an image of the person who runs the business and delivers the service, to provide a personal touch. The cover image should represent the company and what it does in some way, or reflect the company philosophy.

Remember that in order to build brand identity and recognition (so that members of the public recognise your company), you should use the same photos, colour schemes and text on all of the social media streams that the business is using (that is, your pages should all follow the same business branding guidelines).

When setting up your Facebook™ page, you should enter as much information about the business as you can, using the About page. The profile About page helps people find your business. For example, if you enter a valid postal address for the business, then it will appear on Facebook™ Places and when people do a geographical search. Your company profile is important because the text that you include in the short description is visible to anyone viewing your page, along with the address of your website (which you should also fill in on the About page).

The Settings page is also important; you can find this by clicking the Settings link at the top right-hand side of the page. This controls many things about how your page works. The General settings, for example, allow you to develop a page, but keep it unpublished until you are ready for everyone to see it. You can also choose whether people can message you, if visitors are allowed to post to the page and a number of other things, including privacy settings.

Another very useful feature for business pages are Page Roles, which you can set up via the Settings page. These page roles allow other people to run the page and you can give them the ability to do various things such as edit the page, post content to the page and view the page's Facebook™ Insights account. This means that, within a business, different people can have different responsibilities with respect to social media. For example, you could have one person responsible for monitoring and responding to comments/messages and another person responsible for posting new content to the page. To set up another person who can edit the page you need to click the Page Roles link on the left of the Settings page.

An interesting feature of Facebook™ pages (introduced in February 2015) is the ability to set the Preferred Page Audience for your page. Anyone is still allowed to search for the page, but the page is more likely to be seen by people who match your target audience selections.

There are a number of other useful things you can control on the Settings page. For example, the Notifications option allows you to set up email or text message notifications when a variety of things happen on your page. For example, you could receive an email every time anyone comments on one of your posts or every time the page receives a message.

Content creation and publication

During the planning stage, an outline publishing schedule and social media plan should have been created. Now is the time to implement that plan but it is likely, due to the dynamic nature of social media, that the plan will need to be changed and adapted as a result of how the public responds to it and to current events. For example, if a business sells a product which is related to the weather (such as ice cream or umbrellas), then they might need to adjust their posting schedule depending on changes in the weather.

Posts which contain images are likely to be more engaging than those that just contain text so, as part of the content creation process, you will need to obtain suitable images. Photos of the products that the business sells should be used, or photos that reflect the service that the business offers. Also, photos that tie in with the business image and branding will also be useful. Photos need to be of high quality as poor quality photos will reflect badly on the products/services and should, therefore, be avoided. Remember that if you use photos that you have not taken yourself, you need to check the copyright situation and get permission to use them.

Carry out research to produce engaging content

You will also need to think about and research what kind of content will engage your target audience. There are two ways you can do this. You can carry out some market research by finding members of your target audiences, showing them some content ideas and asking them which ones appeal to them most and why. However, this can be quite time consuming. The other way is to use social media analysis tools such as Facebook™ Insights and look at how much interaction each post generates. You can then modify the kind of content you post, based on the analysis you receive.

Improving visibility of published content

There is little point in putting a lot of effort into creating content and posting it on social media if no one sees it. Therefore it is important that you post at the right times on the right days when the majority of your target audience is online. This is something that you can check with Facebook™ Insights, as explained later in the chapter. There are also certain specific things you should do when posting on Facebook™ and Twitter™ to make sure that your posts are seen by as many people as possible.

Facebook™ does not show an individual user every post from all of their friends and the pages that they have liked. Instead, it uses sophisticated algorithms to prioritise those posts it thinks will be the most interesting to them. This is based on research Facebook™ has done into what users like to see and do not like to see in their timeline. Understanding how Facebook™ does this will help improve the visibility of the posts you make.

- ▶ One important factor that Facebook™ uses to decide if your post should appear on an individual's newsfeed is the affinity between you (your business) and that person. This is the amount of interaction (likes, comments and shares) between you and that individual. Therefore, whenever an individual comments on one of your posts, you should respond to help build up the affinity between you and that person.
- ▶ Try to create posts which encourage people to comment on them. One way of doing this is to ask questions rather than make statements. This will also help to build up the affinity between you and your audience.
- ▶ Post about relevant and trending topics and add links to relevant content from other websites or industry experts. For example, if you are a photographer and Canon™ launch a new camera with some special features, comment on this and add a link to the

relevant page on the Canon™ website. The Facebook™ algorithms see this kind of posting as interesting to your audience so there is a greater likelihood that your posts will be widely seen.

- ▶ Avoid hard selling. Posts which simply encourage people to buy your products/services are not considered to be interesting so these types of post are least likely to appear on your audience's newsfeeds.

Research

The way Facebook™ selects which post to show is, as you might imagine, quite a hot topic in the social media world. The algorithm Facebook™ uses is often called 'EdgeRank' and an internet search for 'Facebook Edge Rank' will produce a lot of articles on the subject. However, ensure that you read the most recent ones as Facebook™ develops and improves the algorithm all the time.

To improve the visibility of your tweets on Twitter™, you should consider doing the following.

- ▶ When replying to a Twitter™ follower who has made a comment, it is common to start your tweet with an @ sign and the username of the person you are replying to e.g. '@bertsmith Thanks for that Bert we will look into it and let you know'.
- ▶ These types of reply are not seen by all your Twitter™ followers, only by people who follow both you and the person you are following. If you want all your followers to see the tweet, then do not put the @username at the very start of the tweet.

Another way you can make sure that your posts are seen by your target audience is to use paid-for posts. A business would need to weigh up the cost of a paid advert campaign against the time and effort required to run a 'free' campaign. The two are not mutually exclusive, of course, and a business might well use a paid-for campaign to get their social media presence 'off the ground' and then maintain and develop the followers with a 'free' campaign.

Tip

It is very important to proofread posts before you actually post them. Posts with spelling mistakes or other errors will reflect very badly on the company. If possible, get someone else to check the posts (because it is much harder to spot mistakes in your own work), not just for spelling errors but also to ensure that the meaning of the post cannot be misunderstood and that it is not likely to cause offence to anyone.

Encouraging audience interaction

- ▶ The importance of encouraging audience participation has already been mentioned. Posts need to be phrased in a way that is entertaining and focused on your target audience without being pushy. Including images in posts is always a good idea as people respond better to images rather than text alone. The use of the **click bait** approach is not recommended as many social media users find it annoying and the Facebook™ EdgeRank algorithm does not favour it. Encouraging comments by asking questions is one way; you can also ask people to post photos of themselves using your product. Other possibilities include using surveys (which are useful for obtaining feedback on new product ideas) and quizzes.

Key term

Click bait – a term used for content that encourages users to 'click through' the post to see the linked content on an external website. Click bait content often uses sensationalist headlines such as 'You won't believe what happens next' to exploit the viewer's curiosity.

Integration of information across social media and the company website

For companies that sell their products through an website, one of the main goals of using social media will be to encourage people to visit their website and, ultimately, to purchase their products. Conversely, they will also want people who visit their website to like their Facebook™ page and follow them on Twitter™ and other social media websites. Therefore, a company's social media pages and the company's website should, as far as possible, be integrated in a number of ways.

- ▶ The company website should feature social media buttons to encourage visitors to like/follow their social media pages.
- ▶ The formatting of both the company website and the social media pages should reflect a consistent company branding style. For example, the background photos and profile images used on the social media page should match/reflect the images and colour scheme used on the company website.
- ▶ Social media posts should, where relevant, contain links to the company's website. For example, when a new product is launched, brief details can be given in a social media post, with a link to the product website page, where much more detailed information on the product can be found.

Overall, the idea is that a company's social media pages and their website should integrate with each other, and, of course, to develop brand identity they should have a consistent look to them.

Adapting and testing content on different device platforms

It is likely that you will develop and post content using a PC, but many of your target audience will view the content using mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets or notebooks. You can check which devices and web browsers your audience uses with analysis tools such as Facebook™ Insights. It is a good idea to check how your content looks on different devices, especially those with a much smaller screen, to ensure that your audience will see the posts in the way you intended them to. It is also worth bearing in mind that, as the account holder, the posts you make will often look different from how they appear in a user's newsfeed. For this reason, it is often useful to have a separate social media account available to help you to check how your posts appear to your audience.

Reflect

To work in the social media industry you will need good communication skills. Writing posts which are short but convey the intended meaning, and using the right tone and language, is a real skill. You also need to be able to respond to social media messages, which might include negative comments and complaints, in a positive and helpful way. Setting the right tone when replying to these types of messages is not easy, but you should try to be positive and helpful. Think about techniques that you could use to write short and clear posts and how you would respond positively and helpfully to negative comments.

Implementation of online community building

Ways to develop a business's online community have already been outlined. One approach to develop an online community further is to join other related online communities, rather than just staying within one business's own social media pages. This can be done in number of ways.

Link

Look at Developing an online community for more on how to develop an online community.

- ▶ Joining Facebook™ groups on relevant subjects, joining Google+™ communities or following appropriate accounts on Twitter™ can provide useful sources of information. For example, a photography business could join one of the many photography groups on Facebook™ or Google+™. While many groups frown on businesses posting advertising material, there is nothing to stop the business answering questions and making comments. Many bloggers tweet details of their latest blog posts and, by following relevant bloggers on Twitter™, businesses can keep up to date with interesting and relevant developments. This can also provide a good source of material for posting on your business's social media pages. Sharing (on Facebook™) or retweeting (on Twitter™) interesting relevant posts from other people and companies you have followed is a good way to develop your online community, and help develop the idea in people's minds that your business is knowledgeable and a useful source of relevant information.
- ▶ Tagging photos in Facebook™ is also a way of trying to encourage engagement. For example, suppose that a car dealer asks each person who buys a new car to have a photo taken with the car they purchase. They then ask the person if they would mind posting the picture on Facebook™ and tag the owner in the pictures (assuming they have a Facebook™ account). If they are happy, then the picture will not only go up on the company's Facebook™ page, but will also be seen by all the Facebook™ friends of the person who bought the car, thereby expanding the online community.
- ▶ Twitter™ hashtags provide a way to join in an online conversation about a specific topic. If a business sees a hashtag relevant to their company, then they can tweet a comment using the hashtag.

All of these suggested ways of developing an online community are designed to raise the profile of the business in the minds of people that follow their social media pages. Rather than annoying the business's target audience with pushy direct selling posts, the idea is to build up an impression of a business that knows what it is talking about and is up to date with all the latest information and developments, making this the sort of company that people feel they can trust and can do business with.

Monitoring and responding to comments and automating content posting

It can be difficult to keep track of all the different social media streams and to time postings at the optimum times. Fortunately, there are a number of different tools which can be used to help manage the task of running a social media

campaign. One of the best known tools for this is called Hootsuite®, and as long as you only want to manage a maximum of three different social media streams it is free to use. Hootsuite® not only allows you to view your different social media streams on a single dashboard, but it also allows you to set up social media posts and set a time and date when you actually want them posted, on multiple streams if required. Being able to view all your different social media streams in one place is very useful because, as mentioned several times before, it is very important to respond promptly to comments that people make. Being able to monitor your social media streams in one dashboard means that you do not have to swap between separate browser pages all the time and you can integrate your approach to posting on the various streams more easily.

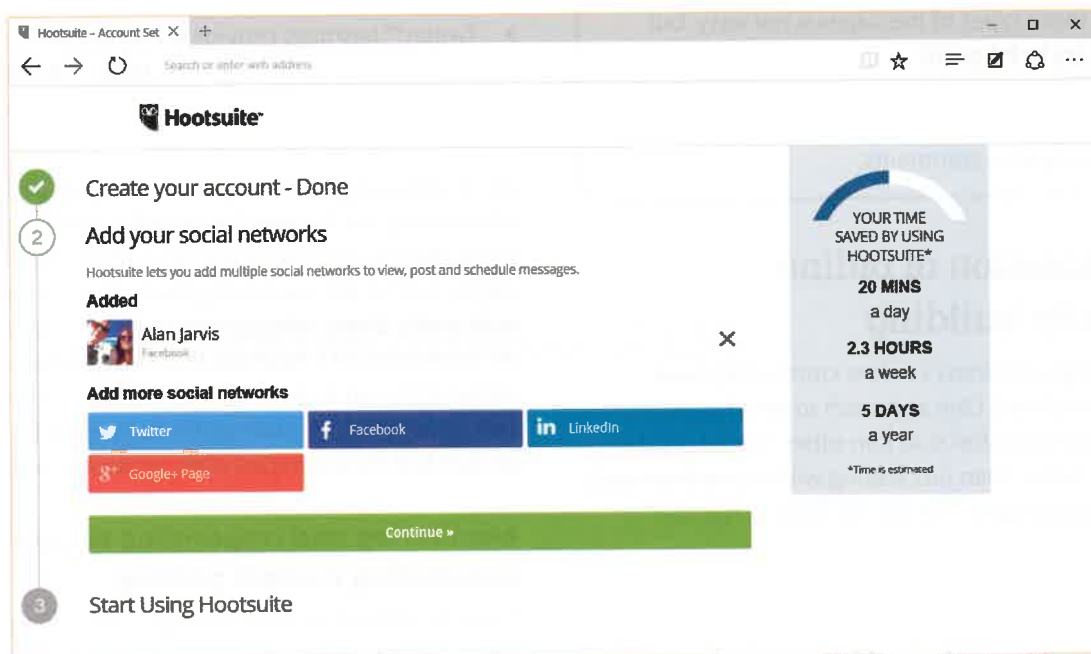
There are many other social media analysis and management tools available. Some of the best know free ones are:

- ▶ TweetReach™ – allows you to analyse how many times your tweets get retweeted
- ▶ Klout™ – uses a variety of measures to identify what people think of your brand and what kinds of post influence them the most
- ▶ Social Mention™ – allows you to monitor the use of different keywords across a wide range of social media websites
- ▶ TweetDeck™ – a Twitter™ management tool that allows you to schedule tweets, track hashtags and manage multiple accounts
- ▶ Google Alerts™ – allows you to monitor the internet for any mentions of your brand, your competitors or any keyword you choose.

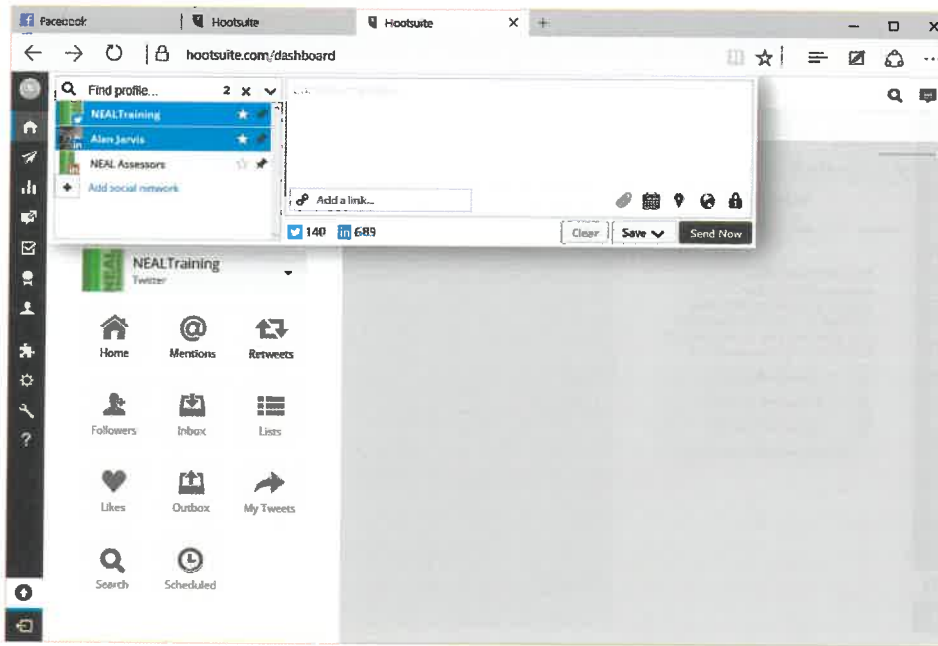
Step by step – Hootsuite™

6 Steps

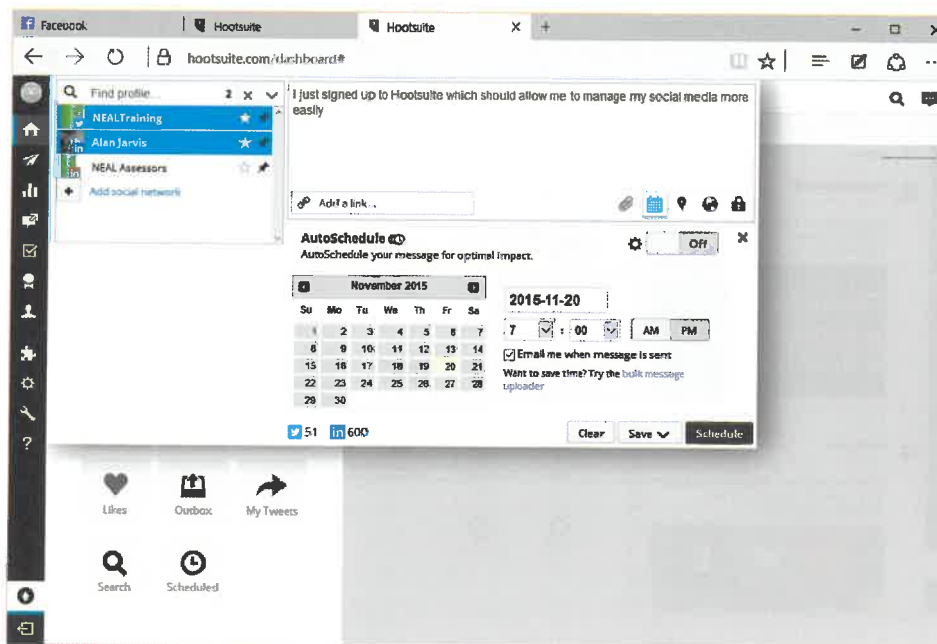
1 Here is a look at some of Hootsuite®'s features. If you log into Hootsuite® using your Facebook™ account you will see something like this.



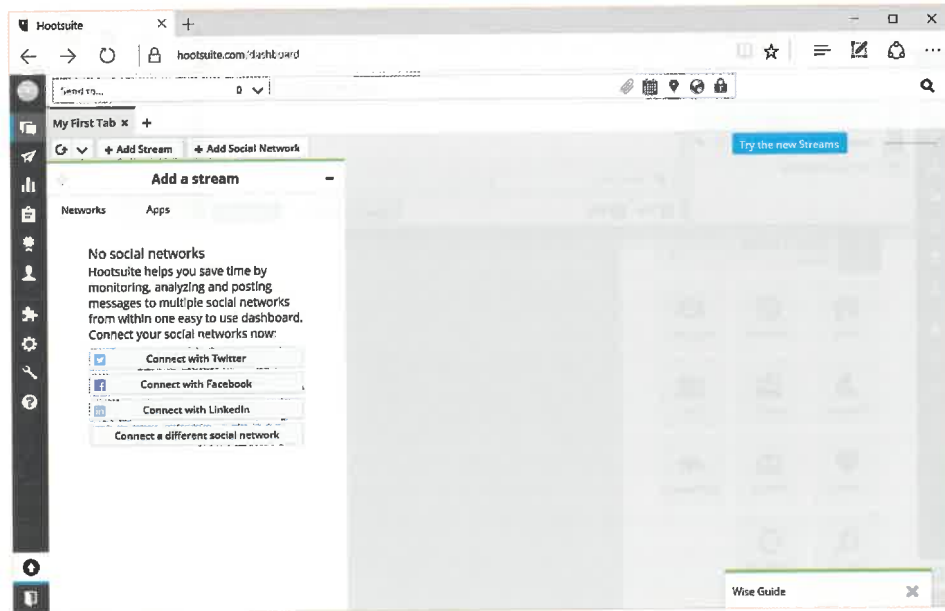
2 You then need to add your other social media pages using the buttons on the page. With the free version of Hootsuite®, you can only add three social media accounts. Hootsuite® has lots of features but one of the most useful is the ability to create a single message and have Hootsuite® post it for you on multiple accounts. When you open the main Hootsuite® dashboard the message creation area is at the top.



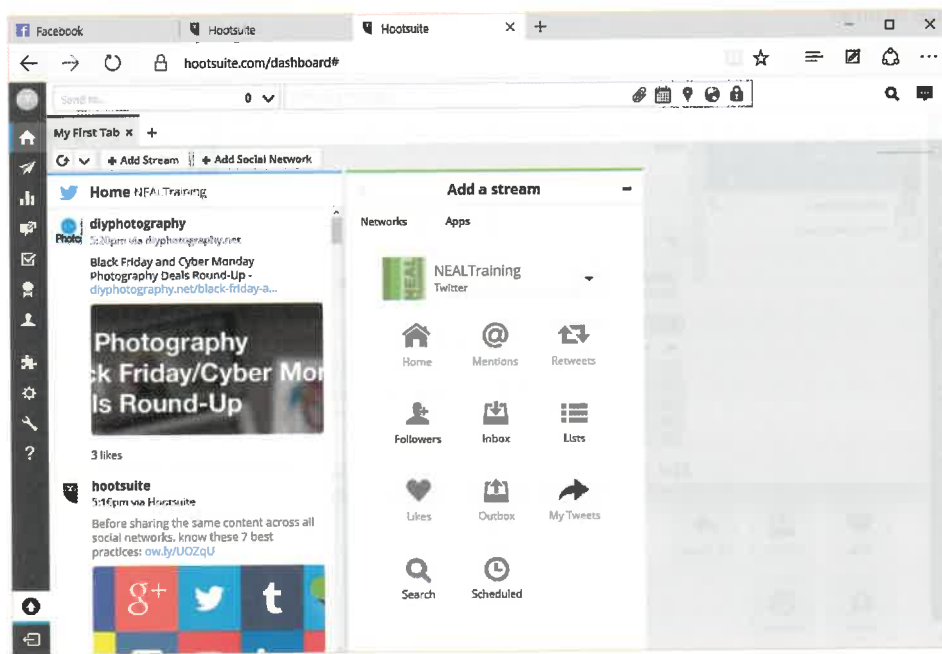
3 You can then type the text of the message you want to post and add links if required. The figure below shows both this and the scheduling option which allows you to choose a time when the post is made. You can, therefore, create posts at a time which is convenient to you but actually post them when your target audience are most likely to be online.



4 Another useful feature of Hootsuite® is the ability to create social media 'streams' and display them on your Hootsuite® dashboard. This means that, rather than having to visit each social media page to see what is going on, you can have all the updates from your social media accounts shown in one place. To set this up, click on the Home button on the panel that runs down the left-hand side of the dashboard and the 'Add a stream box' should pop up.



5 Choose the social media account you want to add the stream for (Twitter™ shown here), and then select what aspect of the stream you want displayed (home is a good starting choice). The figure below shows a Twitter™ stream added.



- 6 Further streams can be added to complete the dashboard and allow you to monitor multiple social media pages at once.

Data gathering and analysis

One of the major benefits of using social media over traditional methods of promotion is that tools are available to allow you to investigate how successful your posts have been and who your audience is. Facebook™, for example, provides a free tool called Facebook™ Insights which provides detailed data on the effectiveness of your social media efforts. Twitter™ provides Twitter Analytics™ (also called the Twitter™ Activity Dashboard), which provides data on how many tweets you have made and how many

people have seen them. There are also many other third-party tools available.

Google Analytics™ is a powerful tool for analysis of website traffic, but it does not provide any social media data. However, Google Analytics™ is a useful tool if the aim of using social media is to drive customers to your company website as it will show the source of these visitors, so that you can see how effective your efforts have been and how many people have 'clicked through' your social media pages to your website.

Step by step: Facebook™ Insights

4 Steps

- 1 Any business page can use Facebook™ Insights as long as they have more than 30 'likes'; you cannot use Insights on your personal Facebook™. The Facebook™ Insights link appears in the menu at the top of your Facebook™ page. Once you click on the link to Facebook™ Insights, the Overview page is shown.
- 2 The Likes box shows the total number of likes the page has received and the number received in the last week. The **Post Reach** shows the number of people who have seen your posts in the last week, and the **Engagement** box shows the number of people who have interacted with the page. In the lower part of the page, is a list of information on the last five posts on the page. This is particularly useful as you can see how effective individual posts have been in engaging with your audience, and the charts on the right give a visual impression of the effectiveness of each post. A link at the bottom of the recent posts table allows you to expand the table to see all posts. Down the left-hand side is a menu from which you can choose to see different data about your page. For example, the Page Views link will display a graph showing how many people viewed your page.

- 3 The default view shows you the page views over the last month, but you can change the period over which the views are shown on the graph at the top right-hand side of the page. This allows you to see the popularity of your business's page over time. Lower down on the page, it shows how many times people came to your Facebook™ page from other websites such as Google™ or your company's website. The Posts link will display charts which show when people who have liked your page are online. This information is very useful as it helps you to decide on the best time and day to post.

- 4 Another interesting page with lots of useful data is the People page. This provides data about the demographics of people who have liked your page (eg their age group, gender and location). In this figure, the page has a predominately male audience (69 per cent male compared with 30 per cent female) and 75 per cent of the people who liked the page are in the 18 to 34 age range (40 per cent are 18 to 24). There is a lot of other information that you can display with Facebook™ Insights. The Help menu, at the top right-hand side of the pages, contains information on how to use Facebook™ Insights.

Key terms

Post reach – the number of people who see a particular post.

Engagement – the number of people who interact with a post in some way (like, comment or share it). Post reach is good, but engagement is much better because it means that, not only did people see your post, but they found it interesting enough to interact with it in some way.

The data that tools such as Facebook™ Insights or Twitter Analytics™ provide can help you to develop and focus a social media campaign in a number of ways.

- ▶ It can identify how much interaction each post you make generates. Posts that generate interaction are what you should be aiming for, and the data should help you see the types of post that are most successful in this respect. This means that you can concentrate your future efforts into developing the types of post that generate a lot of interaction and waste less effort on those that do not.
- ▶ You can also identify your audience profile in terms of age, gender and location. Once you know this, you can compare your actual audience with your target audience. If there is a significant mismatch (for example, your actual audience is much older than your target audience or your page attracts more males than you were aiming to), you can do one of two things. Either adjust the content you are posting to try to attract more of your target audience (that is, post more material that might be of interest to a younger audience and/or female audience), or adjust the profile of your target audience to match the one you have attracted. (This second option might also involve rethinking your product or service and would have many added complications, but sometimes might be necessary.)
- ▶ The data will reveal the location of your audience. If you run a geographically-limited business (such as a dog grooming service), then having lots of followers in the US or Japan is not particularly beneficial (although you might want to consider the possibility of setting up a blog). Therefore, it might be worth making your posts more locally focused. If your business can deliver its products by post and you attract a large non-UK audience, you might want to consider encouraging overseas buyers, for example by mentioning overseas shipping prices.
- ▶ You can monitor the number of likes and shares. This is useful if you have set yourself a target of achieving a certain number of likes or shares during a specified period of time. It is also a way of monitoring the success of the content you post and identifying which types of post achieve the most likes or shares.

Case study

Blogging

If your social media pages develop a lot of followers, you might want to consider setting up a blog on a particular subject. Bloggers post articles at regular intervals (often daily) which are more detailed and in more depth than social media postings. The blog articles are usually promoted to their social media followers by posting a link to the latest blog article. Bloggers who are really successful and have lots of followers can make money from adverts placed beside their blog articles. However, becoming a successful blogger requires a lot of commitment in terms of the time needed to develop the articles and build your audience.

II PAUSE POINT

Tools such as Facebook™ Insights provide valuable objective data to help you to evaluate the success of your social media campaign and your progress towards the targets you have set. This can really help you understand what works well and what is not so successful, so that you can improve your own performance by focusing your efforts in areas you know have been successful in the past.

Prepare five posts, including a variety of content formats, for a business of your choice. Share these via a Facebook™ page that you have set up for a business of your choice. Get your classmates, friends and family to interact with the posts. Then use Facebook™ Insights to analyse how successful each post was in terms of interaction.

Hint

Look back through learning aim C for ideas about the kinds of content you could create for posts, and about how to use Facebook™ Insights.

Extend

Write a report on which post was most successful in terms of interaction and why you think this was. In your report, you should also discuss how your audience is composed in terms of demographics and location.

Assessment practice 3.2

B.P3

B.P4

C.P5

C.P6

B.M2

C.M3

BC.D2

BC.D3

One of the small-business people you gave a presentation to for Assessment practice 3.1 has asked you to develop a social media campaign to promote their photography business. You need to:

- produce a plan for using social media to promote the business, justifying the choices you make and showing how they will meet the purpose and business requirements
- review the plan with others to refine and improve it
- produce appropriate social media content for the business in line with the requirements of your plan
- review data on social media usage and interaction and optimise the content and format/features of the social media website in use
- write an evaluation of the plan you created and its implementation that considers how well the business requirements were met
- demonstrate individual responsibility, creativity, and effective self-management in the planning and use of social media in the context of the photography business.

Plan

- What is the task? What am I being asked to do?
- How confident do I feel in my own ability to complete this task? Are there any areas I think I may struggle with?

Do

- I know what it is I am doing and what I want to achieve.
- I can identify when I have gone wrong and adjust my thinking/approach to get myself back on course.

Review

- I can explain what the task was and how I approached the task.
- I can explain how I would approach the hard elements differently next time (ie what I would do differently).

Further reading and resources

There have also been many books written on the subject. It is always wise to check the publication date of a book in such a dynamic area, as books more than a few years old are not likely to be relevant.

Kitchen, T. and Ivanescu, Y. (2015). *Profitable Social Media Marketing: How To Grow Your Business Using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn And More*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Ryan, D. (2014). *Understanding Digital Marketing: Marketing Strategies for Engaging the Digital Generation*. London: Kogan Page.

Ryan, D. (2015). *Understanding Social Media: How to Create a Plan for Your Business that Works*. London: Kogan Page.

Steam, A. (2014). *Make Social Media Work for your Business*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Brown, M.J. (2015). *Social Media Marketing, 2nd Edition*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Websites

There are many blogs and websites related to social media. Some of the best known are:

- The Social Media examiner: www.socialmediaexaminer.com
- Buffer Social: blog.bufferapp.com
- Razor Social: www.razorsocial.com/blog
- Post planner: www.postplanner.com/blog

THINK ▶ FUTURE



Simon Jones

First year journalism student

After school, I took a Media degree course as I found the subject interesting and I wanted to work in journalism. During my first year, we have completed modules in media photography, radio production and new media (which includes social media). The course has been hard work but I have enjoyed many parts of it and learnt a lot of new things. I know, however that this is a really competitive area and, to progress into a job in media, I am going to have to demonstrate excellent technical skills and creativity. I had a great opportunity to develop some of my skills with a holiday job in my uncle's builders' merchant business recently. It's a medium size business with five large builders' yards in the Wolverhampton area. He asked me to develop the company's social media presence as they only had a Facebook™ page and it hardly ever got updated. Work experience like this was a great opportunity for me as it allowed me to develop real-world skills to add to my academic studies.

Focusing your skills

Planning a social media presence

To be able to develop a social media strategy for the builders' merchant there are a number of things to consider.

- How well do you understand the business? Spend some time in the yards watching how the staff work and talking to customers to understand how social media might be able to work for the business.
- What does the company owner want to achieve by using social media? Is it realistic and achievable?
- What timescales are you working to?
- How will the staff be trained in the company's social media procedures?

Where to start? Once you have learnt as much as you can about the business, you need to formulate an outline social media plan covering the following.

- The purpose of using social media in the company.
For example, you might decide that the main purpose is customer service, providing a method by which customers can enquire about stock levels. A secondary purpose might be to provide information to customers about new products and special offers.

- The social media websites you will initially use and why. For example, you might decide to use Facebook™ and Twitter™ as they provide the messaging facilities that you need to provide customer service.
- The requirement to create a company social media policy. Once it has been written, all of the staff who will use social media need to be made aware of it. It should include procedures for staff who will respond to received messages and information requests.
- An outline project plan showing timescales and tasks.
- Targets you will set and how you will monitor and evaluate the use of social media.
- Outline the type of content you will post. You could post about new stock coming in and, for example, articles about new innovations and techniques in the plumbing world.

You should discuss your plan with some of the staff who will implement it to see if they think it is feasible. Once you have a plan, you need to present it to the company owner for review. Your presentation will need to be professional and focus on the business benefits of what you propose. You are likely to need to make some refinements based on the feedback you get from the company owner.

Getting ready for assessment



Anita is working towards a BTEC National in Information Technology. For learning aim A, she was given an assignment which asked her to create a presentation aimed at local business people about how they can use social media in their businesses. Anita shares her experiences below.

How I got started

First, I created an overall structure for the presentation by listing the main things I needed to cover. These were:

- ▶ an outline of the different social media websites and their audiences
- ▶ the different ways in which businesses can use social media, along with some examples
- ▶ the risks and issues for businesses of using social media
- ▶ an evaluation of the business use of social media.

I collected all my class notes on this topic into a folder and divided them up into the sections listed above. I then chose a PowerPoint® slide template and created title slides for each section. I also did some research to find examples of businesses which use social media for different purposes, took screenshots of these and copied them into my presentation. I found this approach worked well as it gave me a structure around which to build the presentation.

How I brought it all together

I worked through my notes for each section and used a highlighter pen to pick out the main points. I used these as the bullet points on each slide of my presentation, making sure I didn't have more than about five or six small bullet points on each slide, otherwise the text would have become too small to read. I also checked that I just had the main points on the slides and I rewrote the rest of the text from my notes into the slide notes section, rewording them as if I was talking to an audience. I also added some further screenshots to illustrate the text.

In the section about target audiences and site profiles, I added some links to the external websites that I had used in my research. Once I had completed the presentation, I read it through as if I was actually giving it to an audience and I adjusted some of the slides to make them clearer. I added more information to the slide notes where I felt it was needed.

What I learned from the experience.

I found that the notes I made in class were fine on some topics but too brief on others. I wish I had been more consistent in my note-taking as I had to spend quite a lot of time doing research to find out about some topics which had been covered in class but where my notes were not adequate. I found the last section, the evaluation, hard to write. My first attempt was really just an explanation of the risks and issues of using social media. I had to take each point and think hard about how it might relate to a small business and their use of social media. In the end, I decided that this was hard to cover in the presentation slides themselves and that I needed to write most of the evaluation in the slide notes, where I weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of different aspects of social media use, relating these issues to a small business.

Think about it

- ▶ Are you taking class notes and collecting the handouts your teacher has given you? These will be really helpful when you come to write your assignments, so keep them safe and organised in a folder.
- ▶ There is a lot of information about social media on the internet. You can use this in your assignments but check that it is up to date as this is a rapidly changing sector. You can use direct quotes only if you clearly reference them; otherwise you will need to rewrite the information that you find in your own words.
- ▶ Making a plan for completing your assignments is important. You must hand your assignment in on time, so creating a plan with timings can help you make sure that you have everything ready by the deadline.